

Middle School Years: A developmental perspective

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The middle school years are filled with many developmental changes for children and their families. These can be confusing and exciting and sometimes a little frightening but the transition is survivable and some even look back and laugh. Among the many changes children face (physical, social/emotional, and intellectual) they are also dealing with the transition to a new school and school structure.

This is a period of accelerated physical development, marked by increasing height, body breadth and depth, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength. This rapid and uneven bone-muscle growth may result in poor motor coordination and awkwardness. Hormonal changes may result in restlessness and/or becoming easily fatigued with increased need for

rest. Secondary sex characteristics begin to appear and sexual awareness increases. Today's early adolescent is more sexually precocious in a physical and social sense.

Socially, the peer group tends to become more important than the family from the perspective of the early adolescent, and some become more interested in friends and less interested in schoolwork. The search for peer approval increases as the importance of adult approval decreases in the eyes of the middle school student. However, it is important for parents to know that their input is still *critical*. Maintaining parent involvement is crucial in this time of increasing peer pressure.

Intellectually, middle school students undergo a profound change in their ability to think, not so much in what they think, but in how they think.

They begin to question and challenge the values of parents and teachers as they begin to construct their own value systems. Early adolescents prefer active involvement rather than passive learning.

During this time of critical development and change, identity issues are prominent in the early adolescent. There is a heightened ego-

centricity, a feeling as though they are the center of the world. These children are striving for independence and struggling to break out from the family focus, while still needing the guidance and structure of parental involvement. They tend to desire more freedom, but want the security of not having to accept the consequences for their actions.

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As adolescents are going through these tumultuous changes, it is important for the adults in their lives to remain steadfast and stay involved. Don't be afraid to ask questions and set limits. Maintaining communication is vital, and these adolescents are still craving the feedback and structure of the home and school environment, even though they may not acknowledge it.

A smooth transition planned for Floral's 5th grade students

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GRADE 5 TRANSITION SUBCOMMITTEE

On January 23, 2002, the Shrewsbury School Committee voted unanimously to house the Floral Street School 5th graders at Shrewsbury Middle School for the next two years. This option was chosen after much consideration. While this addresses the overcrowding issue at Floral Street School it also maximizes the use of school space in the district. Fortunately, with this decision, the district's core value of maintaining lower class sizes for optimal educational instruction will be followed.

In order to maintain the fifth grade as an elementary program, it will be a satellite program of Floral Street School and will be under the direction of the Floral Street School administration. This decision prompted many parents to come together so they could assist the administration and staff of the Floral Street School to make certain that the transition for the students going into fifth grade will be a positive and enriching experience. There are three committees working toward this common goal: the Welcoming Committee, the Social Committee and the Spirit Committee.

The Welcoming Committee will ensure that the students and parents become familiar with the Middle School before the school years starts. Many plans are underway for open houses at the Middle School for both students and parents. Students will be provided with a handbook/brochure that will address some concerns that have been expressed by the stu-

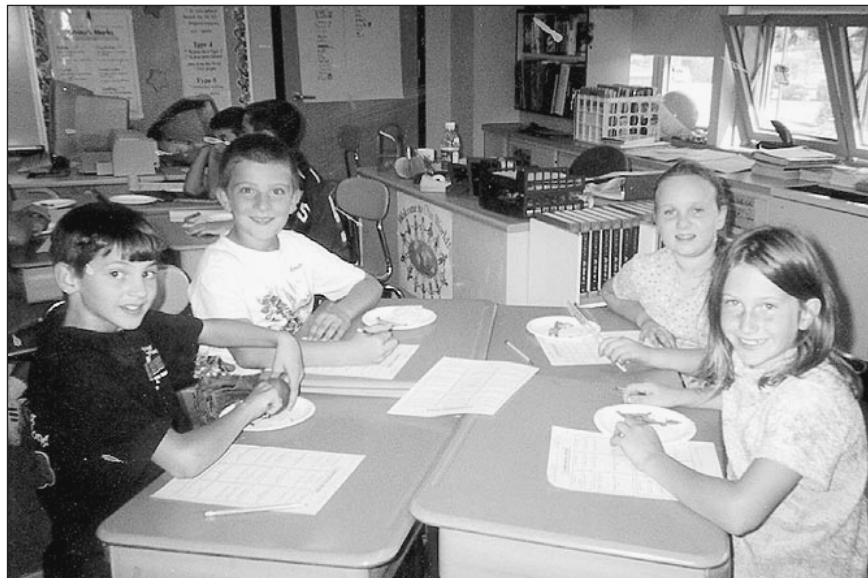


PHOTO BY CAROL BRADLEY

Carol Bradley's fourth grade students at Floral Street School diligently prepare for fifth grade. From left to right: Henry Jones, Antonio Puglielli, Paige Shea and Lauren Bakale.

dents. Current students at the Middle School will be assisting in welcoming the fifth graders into their new environment.

The Social Committee is planning an afternoon that will bring the incoming fifth graders together

throughout the works of this committee. The committees are meeting regularly and will communicate with the school community as all the plans become finalized. Please contact the school if you wish to become involved.

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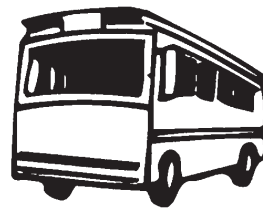
er before school starts in September.

Finally, the Spirit Committee is committed to carrying the spirit and culture from Floral Street School to the Middle School. The theme of 'Floral Street School is Branching Out' will be a common

As the current year is quickly coming to a close, there are already many Floral Street School students, parents, staff and administration working together to make this transition for the fifth graders of September 2002 a happy and memorable experience.

Finance Factoids: Out of district transportation

In the current school year, 31 students are transported to 18 different private special needs schools. The total cost for transportation is expected to be \$266,700. Route costs range from a low \$3,800 to a high of \$36,000 per year for one student.



The average cost per student is \$8,603/year for transportation.

Transportation costs are mitigated by our joint purchasing and ridership agreement with the Assabet Collaborative which includes surrounding districts like Westborough, Northborough, Southborough, and Marlborough.

Students from all of these districts are transported on the same buses and the districts cost-share expenses.

Transportation services are contracted through the Assabet Collaborative which currently has contracts with three vendors: AA Transportation, Waltham Transport, and Clinton Livery.

Shrewsbury Housing Starts

December-17
January- 7
February- 11



Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival

September 27-29

The deadline to buy a telephone pole banner is June 30th. Call Art Dobson (508-842-2826), Barbara Heisler (508-845-6848) or Joanne D'Errico (508-845-1077)

Crafters wanted

The Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival Fifth Annual Craft Show is on Saturday, September 28, 2002 from 9 AM to 3 PM. For more information call Vivian at 508-792-6551 or e-mail her at vpowers@townisp.com.

Town Common

Town Common is the place for fun, food and entertainment! Reserve your spot on the Common. It is an opportunity for the community to learn about organizations and businesses in town. Call Jack and Joyce Perreault at (508) 845-2032 or e-mail them jperreault@townisp.com